

The *Muslim Women's Question* and the Emancipatory Potential of Nafija Sarajlić's Literary Work in the South Slavic and European Context¹

The birth of modern identity in the field of literature can be found in the topics elaborated by the first Bosnian Muslim woman writer, Nafija Sarajlić (1893-1970). Set at the onset of World War I, in a cultural milieu in which the values of the Ottoman and Austro-Hungarian Empires intermingled and confronted each other, these topics represented the growth and functioning of the concept of a woman. A comprehensive and emancipatory discourse and the writer's awareness have been defined in light of the impact of Europeanization and also as essentially deductive content, reflecting the fluidity between self-preservation and destruction as well as rejection by (traditional) society. The author's work is read through the prism of its correlation to writers from Serbian and Croatian cultural circles, with whom she shared not only a social experience, but also her vocation (teacher), as well as literary descriptions of the resistance to the emancipatory practices that they promoted. Sarajlić established herself as a writer who, in her biography and prose work, bore witness to the processes that accompanied the rise of the *Muslim women's question*. This paper's focus is on the issue of Muslim women's education at that time, which was not only a crucial question inside the Muslim community, but also a problem that official Austro-Hungarian policies were supposed to address in Bosnia. To that end, an interpretation of the writer's intimate experiences, as one of the first formally educated teachers, and her exclusion from her profession, her writing and narrative style, as well as her approach to specific motifs, will be examined with regard to how they underscored the modes and avenues for the emancipation of Muslim woman. Despite traditionalisation and patriarchal and clerical processes, which reasserted themselves in the Muslim community, particularly after World War II, it is crucial to emphasize the tremendous importance of Sarajlić's work. The latter, for all the reasons noted above, with its text and context, functions as a starting point in the real path towards shaping a model of a modern South-Slavic and European Muslim woman.

¹ This paper is based on the paper "Emancipation of the (Modern) Muslim Woman in the Prose Works of Nafija Sarajlić in the Grip of the Values and Writing Practices Rooted in the Ottoman and Austro-Hungarian Empire" delivered at the international conference *Modern women thinkers: Intellectual development of women in the 20th century* (Inter-University Centre, Dubrovnik, Croatia, 6-8 June 2022), which will herein be further elaborated and sub-divided into several hypotheses. To that end, the focus here will be on Sarajlić's educational career and the reflections thereof in her prose. On the other hand, the key to exploring this phenomenon lies in the historical contextualization of the Muslim women's question and the connection of the struggle for women's rights to the South Slavic and general European struggles.

The Muslim Women's Question: The Writer's Pledge for Emancipation

Nafija Sarajlić was a proto-feminist and central figure as a writer and intellectual within the framework of modernism in Bosnia and Herzegovina and the period of 'enlightenment', or rather, the 'renaissance' of Muslim culture and literature. She wrote her prose works at a time marked by a significant shift from the Oriental-Islamic to Austro-Hungarian (central European) values and the socio-political and administrative tumult that accompanied the transformation of the preceding system, which in turn resulted in World War I and a new world order.² Sarajlić's modest body of literary consists of ten short stories and one unpublished poem written between 1912 and 1918.³ They not only testify to a historical moment (the birth of the idea of emancipation of Muslim women, i.e., addressing the women's question). Her work highlights some vital aspects of the social phenomena of her time, such as the awareness of women's own writing and the need to educate girls, or more generally, the problems associated with the condition in which women

² Nafija Sarajlić (née Hadžikarić), was born during Austro-Hungarian administration in Bosnia and Herzegovina (1878-1918). She belonged to a traditional Muslim lineage, which left a trace in her writing and the values that she promoted. During her lifetime, she witnessed several different social and political systems: former/post-Ottoman, the period of Austro-Hungarian administration in Bosnia, the Kingdom of Yugoslavia and then the Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia. It is possible to track the imprint that these systems left on her: from her role in public life, through the retreat to her intimate space and abandonment of writing, and then to her marginalization and complete fall into obscurity. Even though her withdrawal from the public sphere makes it impossible to discuss the continuity and reception of her work, as early as the 1970s she was noted as a representative of Muslim culture. (See: ISAKOVIĆ 1972, IDRIZOVIĆ 1977, SALIHBEGOVIĆ 1980). This idea is maintained throughout the 1980s (LJILJAK 1986, ISAKOVIĆ 1987, RIZVIĆ 1990) and it became more prominent from the 1990s onward with the establishment of the Bosniak literary canon (DURAKOVIĆ 1995 and 2012, MEMIJA 1997, BRKA 1998, BEGIĆ 2002, PIRIĆ 2010, TOMAŠEVIĆ 2021). In short, as Svetlana Tomić (2018) explains, prominent women are systemically ignored by all public structures and fields of knowledge or, in other words, subjected to negative selection based on stereotypes. "[T]he more important a woman was, the more suppressed from public memory she was" (Tomić 2018: 104). Stated succinctly, standing firmly for ideas that clashed with accepted thought in the socialist system, the colonial idea, Austro-Hungarian practices and Ottoman bias pushed Sarajlić aside, especially by the Yugoslav literary canon (and antifascist struggle ideal). She was therefore, according to Zlatan Delić (2017), deemed a misfit and irrelevant, up to the moment when she was rehabilitated for the purpose of establishing and reinforcing the Bosnian literary canon (after socialist Yugoslavia disintegrated). "Her phenomenon has been used in the ethno-national Bosniak body for patriarchal representational politics. In other words, she was understood as the ideal image of a woman victim who neglects herself and her needs for the benefit of men, families and collectives whose needs become her personal needs" (LIHIĆ *et al.* 2019: 27).

³ Her first story, "Rastanak" (Parting), was published in the magazine *Zeman* [Time] in 1912. She published her "Teme" [Themes] in the magazine *Biser* [Pearl], edited by poet Musa Ćazim Ćatić, until 1918. and in the *Gajret kalendar* [Zeal Calendar]. Publication of a collection of her stories in Mostar was planned in 1916, but postponed due to World War I. The first edition was finally published after a long wait in 1986, when *Zadrugar* printed her first collection under the title *Teme*.

lived and the roles for which they were predisposed. Intellectual and literary work and its feminine position need to be studied and interpreted in the light of social and historical processes and the radical embrace of two directions that were also cultural in nature: one would be “assimilation with European culture and progressive West, and the other detachment from Oriental sources. She [Sarajlić] realized that the Bosnian people had only one way out and that would be to assume accountability for their future and the uplift of the people.”⁴ At the same time, her entire life and work were determined by an awareness of and longing for her people’s cultural revival, strongly influenced by her determination to achieve collective progress, especially at a deeper level, which was the prerequisite for reform and abandonment of traditional notions and values. This prerequisite entailed a confrontation with patriarchal and retrograde viewpoints. Entranced by the national awakening, Sarajlić helped spur the de-Ottomanisation of society, maintaining that Bosnian and Herzegovinian society, primarily the Muslim community, needed to be reconstructed in order to keep pace with the civilized West and do away with their own depravity, marginalization, inferiority and neglect.

Given the fact that in general, Sarajlić’s attitudes and authorship were determined by the modern process of de-Ottomanisation of Muslim society, her work was imbued with the so-called Muslim women’s question that was addressed between the two World Wars. She adopted the position of an authentic representative of her time, adjusting to the new system. In short, the Muslim women’s question argued for the educational and social emancipation of Muslim women, so it included “discussion about the status and rights of women with emphasis on the role she assumes in positive changes.”⁵ Some of the key issues were: wearing traditional clothing, cultural and educational emancipation, participation in public life, and the rights of Muslim women in terms of employment, etc. “The education of the Muslim woman imposed itself as a very important part of her future active role in society and her family.”⁶ Although the discourse about this complex question was put forth by the Islamic Community in Bosnia (with two opposing sides: traditional and modernist) which affirmed the progressive stance of Islamic Community head Džemaludin Čaušević (1870-1938) and the (male) intellectual elite, Muslim women fought for access to education and social activism.⁷ Men’s interference in the Muslim women’s question confirmed their choice to maintain the patriarchal system of power and privilege. On the other hand, the feeble voice of women writers in their contemporary press was simultaneously affirmative in terms of women’s liberation and, more commonly, supportive of the prevailing

⁴ PEČENKOVIĆ & DELIĆ 2015: 80-87.

⁵ JAHIĆ 2015: 117-156.

⁶ KUJRAKOVIĆ 2009: 101-121.

⁷ On the importance of his work, see LEKIĆ 1996 and Nusret KUJRAKOVIĆ 2012.

opinion that the education of a woman should be limited and aimed at enabling her to “perform as a wife, mother and housekeeper.”⁸ Sarajlić’s efforts as a leading Muslim woman intellectual to secure emancipation gained importance, and thus merit study, primarily in the context of obtaining the right to education and similar patriarchal and clerical mechanisms. Specifically, aspects of her biography make it possible to reconstruct her intimate development in the field of education. Alongside her biography, it is crucial to include and carefully read her stories, so that they may be interpreted with a focus on the literary formulation of motifs pertaining to education.

Official State Policy: the Importance of Education to the Creation of a Model for the Modern European Muslim Woman

The local Muslim population responded to the implications of the cultural revival and industrialization imposed upon them by Austro-Hungarian administration in Bosnia by backwardly retreating to the confines of their own rigid interpretation of Islamic Sharia [*šerijat*] law as the only way to preserve their traditions and identity, as well as their bare survival. In a nutshell, “they perceived themselves as a threatened minority.”⁹ Such a reaction constituted self-Orientalisation as the response of Islam in the Balkans to the conundrum of “retrograde conservatism vs. emancipation and modernization.”¹⁰ Self-Orientalisation solidly grounded in a rejection of the new resulted in a different identity of people who were entangled in contradictions. However, they still needed modernization and reform as an appeal for evolution and progress. This involved the “the interplay between an internalized self-Orientalising gaze that produced a sense of inferiority, on the one hand, and a reactive identification with the project of Utopian modernity, on the other.”¹¹ The impact of the new social order marked a certain dissolution of the former structure and reconstruction of the “relationship of inside and out, of private and public, which was integral to what only came to be recognized as a traditional society under the onslaught of modernity itself.”¹² The mask of modern tendencies with a need to administer, protect and defend European borders and set a clear boundary against the wild Orient actually concealed a mission to civilize and imperialize Bosnia and the Bosnian Muslim population. European territory under Ottoman rule was perceived as special having “an unique physiognomy.”¹³ Inside

⁸ JAHIĆ 2015: 117-156.

⁹ GIOMI 2015a: 1-18.

¹⁰ MAURER 2014: 184-219.

¹¹ Ibid.

¹² Ibid.

¹³ MATEŠIĆ & SLAPŠAK 2017: 51.

the discourse about Bosnian Orientalism, to paraphrase the study *Rod i Balkan* [Gender and the Balkans] (2017), that is, Marina Matešić and Svetlana Slapšak: the Balkans participated on both sides of the colonial border with its inventions, meaning that it is possible in light of that fact to define it as ambivalent, transitional, multi-faceted. The Balkans, therefore, are not one-dimensional, simplistic and entirely negative. And to support this hypothesis, which may be generated not only via borderline Orientalism but also by positioning the Muslim population on the scale of positive and negative, wherein the Euro-Balkan Muslims,¹⁴ to some extent due to their Slavic origin and white ethnicity, are treated as “our, good” Muslims, loyal to Europe, those who can be civilized, accepted, altered and then incorporated into European identity.¹⁵

“The key move in that civilisational mission; in the view of staggeringly low percentage of literacy (e.g., at the beginning of the 1880s [...] women’s illiteracy in Bosnia and Herzegovina was above 95%,¹⁶ was the establishment of a new, contemporary and European system of education,¹⁷ “which implied equal treatment of men and women in their right to be educated,”¹⁸ especially because “female education was considered an essential step in the ‘civilizing’ of the Bosnian population.”¹⁹ This stance was the product of many centuries of Western stereotypes about Muslim women, emphasizing the need for emancipation and “drawing attention to suppressed Oriental women.”²⁰ The image and model of a Muslim woman from the Balkans was produced in keeping with the coordinates of political and imperial concerns that characterised the travelogue genre in which the Muslim woman of the Balkans is infantilized, her role reduced to a merely rudimentary one in society and isolated from family life.

Despite the predominantly negative image of Muslim women, an important example of the destruction of this pattern was provided by the book *Pisma iz Niša*:

¹⁴ Of Slavic origin.

¹⁵ See: FOSTER 2021: 1-3.

¹⁶ JACEK LIS 2021: 70-86.

¹⁷ In keeping with education policies in Bosnia and Herzegovina, during Austro-Hungarian administration Muslim clubs, *mekteps* and religious schools were initially supported and vocational schools for girls were established, as well as a state primary school for boys and girls, and finally, the Sarajevo Muslim Women’s School (1879). Muslim girls could only be educated in Muslim primary and secondary schools, and in 1901 a three-year course (later a four-year course) was established for Muslim girls who wanted to further their education. The Muslim Women’s Teacher-Training School (three-year course) was established in 1913. Alongside slow internal reform, educators of Croatian background such as Jagoda Truhelka and Jelica Belović-Bernadžikovska, both writers, initiated many societal processes, as did many teachers from neighbouring countries who spoke the language and came to work in Bosnia.

¹⁸ HATUNIĆ 2016: 135-147.

¹⁹ GIOMI 2015a: 1-18.

²⁰ MATEŠIĆ & SLAPŠAK 2017: 136.

O haremima [Letters from Niš: On harems] (1879) by Jelena Dimitrijević, who recounted her direct observations of that community's traditions and customs. Just the fact that many of these letters were written in Turkish in Cyrillic script confirms interest in the adequate and empathetic representation of women in the Muslim cultural circle.²¹ Numerous stereotypes stemmed from the fact that a universal image was created of the Balkan Muslim woman who needed to be civilized. This stereotype was the product of the perception of the Muslim woman through the prism of negative otherness and rigid Sharia law. In order to understand this position of civilizing a Bosnian Muslim woman, we need to understand her role and importance in Ottoman tradition and culture.²² By the end of the nineteenth and beginning of the twentieth century, the Muslim woman in Bosnia, like the woman in other South Slavic spaces, was a significant part of the private sphere (spouse, mother, housekeeper), subjugated by male authority.²³ However, unlike the members of other confessional communities, Muslim women adhered to a code of conduct prescribed by the Qur'an. That was the reason why they had an option to participate, albeit marginally, in public life, using personal heritage in order to pursue charity work.²⁴

According to Sharia law, girls would receive mandatory education, but only in religious schools and *mekteps*.²⁵ There the girls would (in 10 years of schooling) learn about Islam, the Arabic language and script [the Arabic abjad]²⁶ and this is where they could earn their diplomas, degrees and professional titles, enabling

²¹ See: DOJČINOVIĆ & KOCH 2017: 76-95.

²² See: ČAR-DRNDA 2007: 124-153.

²³ A comparative reading of women's writing on life in the Bosniak and Serbian cultural contexts was done by Celia HAWKESWORTH in *Voices in the Shadows: Women and Verbal Art in Serbia and Bosnia* (2000).

²⁴ Sharia decreed that women could inherit and administer property. They mostly used that property to invest in a pious foundation [waqf] and education, and to financially support poor students and build religious schools, charities, mosques, shops and other socially beneficial institutions. On the other hand, they resisted unjust authorities, poverty and military conscription and occupation.

²⁵ The first female *mekteps* (religious schools) date back to 1525, when it is assumed that the Divan-Katib Hajdar-effendi Women's Mektep was built in Sarajevo. Besides *mekteps*, women and girls gained knowledge in tekkes, mosques, private schools and courses, usually on household management. They could become teachers in female *mekteps* and teach Islamic literacy and be awarded the titles of *bula*, *mualima*, *hafiza* or *sheiha*. In the post-Ottoman period, Muslim women gained the right to secular education and in accordance with that the emancipatory and educational path changed Muslim women. For example, education was aided by the cultural and educational Muslim society in Bosnia and Herzegovina, Sandžak and Serbia, *Gajret* [Zeal] (1906-1941). The impact of their work was only seen in the late 1920s, or in the period between two World Wars, when the education of Muslim women at the University of Belgrade was also encouraged. On the importance of the magazine *Gajret* to these processes, see: LEKIĆ 1996: 188-197.

²⁶ Knowing the alphabet not only enabled them to read, for they could also copy the Qur'an and write their own poetry in keeping with the spirit of Islam and Eastern oral tradition.

them to run certain institutions.²⁷ In the private sphere or at home, Muslim women had the opportunity to learn to use the alphabet of Bosnian landowners, called *Bosančica* (known in women's circles as *begovica* and "women's letters").²⁸ However, the Muslim woman was unable to adapt to the needs of contemporary society and her own aspirations, due to external and formal obstacles in the education of Muslim girls (except in confessional girls schools) and her participation in public life; such as outdated woman's attire such as the veil [*zar*] and burqa [*feredža*].²⁹ Due to religious and traditional clothing restrictions, isolation from men and mixed company, public life and the fact that she was not permitted to attend regular primary schools or pursue any higher education, the Bosnian Muslim woman could not part in public, political or cultural life.

Notwithstanding the fact that Islam (in contrast to Sharia) held an emancipated stance towards woman in the field of education, declaring that "it was not only permitted but mandatory as well (*farz*),"³⁰ especially during Austro-Hungarian administration, the social status of women stagnated. The Bosnian Muslim woman was "bound by shackles of old-fashioned convictions and dated religious customs and therefore excluded from public life."³¹ In order to overcome the restrictions confronted by a significant part of the population, but in fact to accomplish the imperial aim of de-Orientalising the Balkans, the Austro-Hungarian government sought to reform the old and create a new image of a modern, European Muslim woman. "Very sensitive to Western Orientalist discourses, according to which supposedly 'enslaved' and 'ignorant' Muslim women were the best evidence of the inferiority of Muslim civilization as a whole, [the state] advocated primary and secondary education of Muslim women in state schools."³² The attitude towards the veil greatly contributed to a negative attitude towards Muslim women and to a general Orientalisation, where "the veil represented a titillating scandal to the Western gaze that served to bring this defining difference into the sphere of the imaginary and, while seeming to respect the privacy being claimed, was in fact a sexualisation through concealment – the veil reinforced the Oriental status of the Bosniak."³³ Thus, the liberation of the Muslim woman from the bounds

²⁷ See: BEĆIROVIĆ & HURIĆ-BEĆIROVIĆ 2015: 187-199.

²⁸ According to researcher Mehmed Nezirović, this script was used in Bosnian homes, while lyrical poems, letters and articles testify that this script was used by young Muslim women. "We must allow for the possibility that girls, especially from exemplary bey families learned *bosančica* in their home environment – that is why it is called women's script – perhaps because they left traditional schools earlier than male children". NEZIROVIĆ 2004: 8-9.

²⁹ MILIŠIĆ 1999: 225-241.

³⁰ HATUNIĆ 2016: 135-147.

³¹ MILIŠIĆ 1999: 225-241, according to Kemura, 1984.

³² GIOMI 2015a: 1-18.

³³ MAURER 2014: 184-219.

of Sharia³⁴ (even for the dress code, because school girls also had to wear the veil and burqa) in compliance with the beliefs and actions of Austro-Hungarian administration could be achieved by inclusion in official, secular education.

To achieve this goal of civilizing Bosnian woman, the territorial government decided to solve this issue by launching a special program for education of girls, aware of the fact that only privileged girls from well-off families attended schools and that those schools were confessional.³⁵ Although the reform of education made it possible for girls to be educated and for women to achieve emancipation, the process itself “did not offer a fair chance for all national or religious groups.”³⁶ However, in terms of education, which was the key domain of emancipation in the period of Austro-Hungarian administration of Bosnia, despite the huge increase in number of Muslim girls attending the schools, they still stagnated “as the dismissive and antipathetic attitude of Muslim women towards education would last for years to come.”³⁷ The advancement of Muslim women in Bosnia, thanks to and in relation to the Austro-Hungarian and also interwar³⁸ religious traditionalisation of the women’s question, was vitally contested, particularly in the domain of curbing illiteracy among Muslim women.³⁹ These limitations stemmed from the claim that the priority was accorded to religious and not secular education, due to the

³⁴ Sharia law in Bosnia as the mainstream for Muslims was in effect until 1945.

³⁵ Another example of this were the schools and institutes like those established by Staka Skenderova (1858) and Adeline Pauline Irby (1866). It is interesting that Skenderova, after her school was closed, dedicated herself to working in Miss Irby’s school. The resolute opposition to girls education in Bosnia and Herzegovina was marked by accusations that these teachers wanted to change the identity of the girls and bring about new, different customs that would change the nation’s core. Their schools primarily educated Christian girls, even though there were students of other religions. Catholic girls were educated in public schools attended by children of both sexes, and Muslim girls mostly attended *mekteps*. When it comes to high schools and higher education, female students could attend schools like the *Ženska preparandija* (Women’s teacher training school) in Sarajevo (1911), a three-year course in a Muslim primary school for teachers (for Muslim girls) and the public and private secondary schools for girls with vocational and general courses (one private school was for Muslim girls) and trade schools, where they learned sewing, weaving and embroidery. See: PAPIĆ 1972.

³⁶ JACEK LIS 2021: 70-86.

³⁷ HATUNIĆ 2016: 135-147.

³⁸ The period between the two World Wars.

³⁹ Real headway for Muslim woman in terms of educational policy and their status in general occurred after the end of World War II with the inclusion of Bosnia and Herzegovina into the Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia (SFRY), and the constitutional guarantee of women’s rights, as well as the campaign to eliminate the veil and burqa as women’s attire and the subsequent law to that effect (by 1950) as a prerequisite for a productive and emancipated life. “All laws and customs that kept women in submission, maintaining misery and ignorance, were still in effect in 1941” (MILIŠIĆ 1999: 225-241). However, Bosnian Muslim woman became visible participants in the public sphere with the Antifascist Women’s Front, the antifascist liberation war and finally in the new social system.

slow-moving reform of Muslim confessional schools and curricula, long-delayed literacy campaigns for Muslim women (literacy courses with disputable religious priorities), and the establishment of Muslim secondary schools for women.

*Against Traditionalism in the Muslim Community: a Father Strikes a Blow
Against the Patriarchy*

The most vehement resistance to the education of girls and Western emancipation of women came from intellectuals, writers and politicians who opposed the idea that “women in particular attend European schools, established by Austria-Hungary.”⁴⁰ “The fiercest opposition came from Muslim traditional notables – that is, the majority of religious officials (*ilmija*) and Muslim landowners (*begovat*).”⁴¹ Although their social status had diminished considerably because they declined to submit to the new, Christian administration which they mistrusted, Muslim notables were uncompromising advocates of traditionalism, self-Orientalisation and the exclusion of their own community so sorely in need of progress.

However, in a social environment characterized by self-stereotyping and backward trends, merchant and tailor Avdaga Hadžikarić, the father of writer and intellectual Nafija Sarajlić, “did not hesitate to educate his female children, which was considered a precedent.”⁴² Consequently, Nafija and her four sisters completed the Girls Teacher Training School “as an expected choice for girls.”⁴³ That school educated “Muslim ‘new women’.”⁴⁴ It is noteworthy that her family suffered a certain stigma as a result, confirmed by information obtained from her granddaughter, Halida Kapetanović Sarajlić. His tailor shop was stoned and Hadžikarić was “stigmatized by the townspeople, and they used to reproach him by saying, “Why would you send your girls to school? They should be at home.”⁴⁵ According to the testimony of Nafija’s granddaughters, her father Avdaga felt so ashamed for enrolling his daughters in secondary school that did not go downtown for a week.⁴⁶ Nafija Sarajlić not only became one of the first Muslim women to graduate from secondary school – although she merely received the

⁴⁰ HATUNIĆ 2016: 135-147.

⁴¹ GIOMI 2015a: 1-18.

⁴² LIHIĆ *et al.* 2019: 25.

⁴³ *Ibid.*

⁴⁴ GIOMI 2015b: 274-292.

⁴⁵ KAPETANOVIĆ SARAJLIĆ, 2017. The statements by Sarajlić’s granddaughter can be found in the text and interview under the title: “Nafija Sarajlić, female writer, intellectual and fighter for women’s rights”. See Bibliography for a more detailed account.

⁴⁶ The information is available according to her granddaughter’s oral testimony. For a more detailed account, see Bibliography: *Priča o Nafiji Sarajlić* [The story of Nafija Sarajlić].

highest education available for girls in Bosnia at the time – she was allowed to pursue her educational work and thus become a part of public life. Her teaching career lasted only three years. In that context, it is important to observe elements and motifs tied to teaching in her stories, especially with a view to an imminent aspect of interpretation, in which “Sarajlić emphasizes a gendered aspect within her formal innovation.”⁴⁷

The New South Slavic and European Paradigm – Teachers and Writers Draga Gavrilović, Jagoda Truhelka and Nafija Sarajlić

The reception of Nafija Sarajlić’s biography and works – both inside and outside of the canon – mostly focused on the sensationalism created by her life, as well as the potential stemming from her affiliation with a particular cultural circle. An in-depth interpretation of the stories from the collection *Teme* [Themes] is almost always absent. The lack of a concrete analysis of the text is a result of the neglected historical context which shaped her writing.⁴⁸ Reflections of the Muslim women’s question, specific to the emancipatory dimension of education, left a trace in Sarajlić’s biography and artistic creations. Women’s education, in the light of Sarajlić’s prose, is this paper’s central research problem. That innovative approach is confirmed by the creation of a framework through the author’s connection to the historical circumstances, the identification and interpretation of historical, literary, and feminine struggles. Furthermore, the beginning of the Muslim women’s literary tradition and history will be reconstructed, strategies of resistance (not rebellion) – formulated when the problems women confront vis-à-vis society were first recorded – will be affirmed. In its second dimension, Sarajlić’s work will for the first time be linked to the works of South Slavic female authors who were also teachers and who also shared the experience of living under Austro-Hungarian rule, as well as the emancipatory thrust in terms of their

⁴⁷ SCHWARZ & THORSON 2017: 42.

⁴⁸ See the critical works of Alija Isaković, Muris Idrizović, Melika Salihbegović, Aleksandar Ljiljak, Muhsin Rizvić, Enes Duraković, Emina Memija, Amir Brka, Midhat Begić, Alija Pirić and Dragana Tomašević. The common note of all canon interpretations is the emphasis on the author’s biographical data, followed by a general evaluation of her work and also, often, reaffirming her role as a model Muslim woman who abandoned her teaching, as well as writing, careers for the sake of her family. On the other hand, a series of pro-feminist interpretations ignores the historical context with frequent omissions or faulty interpretations of resistance strategies, with positive discrimination or criticism of her proto-femininity, as an affirmation of the male discourse and system: Celia Hawkesworth, Anisa Avdagić, Zlatan Delić, Ifeta Lihic *et al.*, Amila Batovanja Hrustić *et al.*, Vildana Pečenković and Nermina Delić. I would like to point out that Fabio Giomi attempted to analyze the context, but he did not conduct a deeper literary analysis thus connecting Sarajlić’s stories, nor did he put the stories in the South Slavic context, which is further described by his notes on the period, whereby the author’s works were detected and shown as a part of a wider phenomenon of women’s writing in Bosnia and Herzegovina.

struggle for women's rights. The new, closer recontextualisation of the life and works of Nafija Sarajlić will confirm the relevance of the topic and the culture of the Bosnian Muslim woman. On the next level, the particular culture of the Muslim woman will be reintegrated into the South Slavic European context – as an important paradigm of otherness and difference.

A few decades prior, or parallel to Nafija Sarajlić, the first teachers and writers from the Serbian cultural circle were working and writing: Draginja Draga Gavrilović (1854-1917), Mileva Simić (1859-1946) and Danica Bandić (1871-1950). Alongside them, the context is completed by Croatian intellectuals (teachers and writers) who worked in the same period: Marija Jambrišak (1847-1937), Jagoda Truhelka (1864-1957) and Jelica Belović-Bernadžikovska (1870-1946). The common denominator for these women, besides their shared profession, was the common central motif and character of the teacher, the proto-feminist attitude, and the pedagogical ideals interlaced with their literary aesthetics, as well as the autobiographical, didactic reflection on their writing. Draga Gavrilović, just like Sarajlić, was one of the first educated teachers in this part of Austria-Hungary, who was enrolled in the secondary teachers school in Sombor, as decided by her father Milan.⁴⁹ Furthermore, Gavrilović taught “the generation of the first institutionally educated women in Serbia.”⁵⁰ At the same time as Sarajlić in Muslim literature (the first female prose writer), Gavrilović is considered the first female novelist in Serbian literature. Her prose represented the issue of women's emancipation, but also the themes from a teacher's life.⁵¹ Along with her educational work, Gavrilović's writing (in various periodicals of the time), choice of genre, heroines and narrative style, showed “an awareness of the need for a strong resistance to patriarchal prose.”⁵² The didactic dimension of her works is confirmed by the short story *Iz učiteljičkog života* [From a Female Teacher's Life] (1884) and *Devojački roman* [A Young Girl's Novel] printed in serialized form in the journal *Javor* [Maple] (1889).⁵³ An important part of Jagoda Truhelka's educational work was the establishment and editing of the family journal *Na domaćem ognjištu* [At the Family Hearth] (1901-1914) intended for women and the family, with a focus on educational policy and women's cultural engagement, teacher rights as well as a series of “then topical questions connected to women's education.”⁵⁴

⁴⁹ *Digitalna baza podataka Knjiženstvo, teorija i istorija ženske književnosti na srpskom jeziku do 1915. godine* [The digital database *Knjiženstvo – the Theory and History of Women's Writing* in Serbian until 1915].

⁵⁰ KOH 2012: 57.

⁵¹ *ŽeNSki muzej* [The Virtual Women's Museum] represents a digital collection of works related to the life and writing of women who marked the history of Novi Sad.

⁵² TOMIĆ 2014: 151.

⁵³ The novel was first published in its integral version as late as 1990.

⁵⁴ IVON 2021: 199-218.

The entanglement of the educational and literary is confirmed by Truhelka's work *U carstvu duše: Listovi svojoj učenici* [In the Realm of the Soul: Letters to My Pupil] (1910), which cannot be classified in terms of its genre and which contains 27 essays on pedagogy, philosophy, art and prose. Other than evoking her correspondence with her former teacher, Magdalena Šerpel, making it a remarkable text, Truhelka here emphasised women's education, confirming that her private world is "(a woman's) public interest."⁵⁵ The field of knowledge, as she explained it, contained the legitimate but ignored female perspective. Analyzing Truhelka's prose, Slavica Jakobović Fribec pointed out the entanglement between the discourse of the teacher (the transfer of knowledge) with the discourse of the writer (the creation of knowledge) or the creation of the discourse of the teacher "through the dialectics of mediation between female writing and reading, knowing and learning."⁵⁶

In that way, a particular female narration, a stable structure for the transfer of knowledge and a differently engaged female identity and the figure of the teacher who plays an active role in the community are created. The character of the female teacher as the central focus of didactic writings can be found in the prose of Gavrilović, Truhelka and Sarajlić. The character of the teacher and the transmission of the female writers' own experiences demonstrate the intensity of patriarchal resistance to women and their work in all three communities, and beyond. The active role of the female teacher which all three writers aspired to also incorporated a renewed identity of an intellectual woman as "thinking womenfolk" (Gavrilović), "the enlightened woman" (Truhelka) and "rise, woman" (Sarajlić). This kind of activity is best represented through Gavrilović's creation of the character of the teacher Darinka, who constitutes the axis of both works and who oversteps the bounds of desirable upbringing, and, as Svetlana Tomić states, the heroine "shifts from the 'private' dimension to the 'public' patriarchy."⁵⁷ The means and mechanisms of public patriarchy affect the choices of the heroine, teacher and writer, as she chooses to code the messages directed at women: her readers. On the other hand, Nafija's teacher is faced with the inability of performing reformative work inside her own classroom. In the following sections of the paper, some of Sarajlić's didactic attitudes will be interpreted, using examples from her stories. This interpretation encompasses multiple goals: understanding the position of the Muslim female teacher/intellectual, analyzing and comparing the experiences, identifying resistance strategies and proto-feminist works, as well as the recontextualisation of this woman writer within both South Slavic and modern, European processes.

⁵⁵ JAKOBOVIĆ FRIBEC 2007: 83-94.

⁵⁶ Ibid.

⁵⁷ TOMIĆ 2014: 145.

A Story at the Junction between Autobiography and Fiction from Nafija Sarajlić's Intimate Standpoint

The ideal of girls' education was not only a feature of the Muslim women's question, but it was also established as a significant and indispensable part of a broader emancipatory movement among different peoples, particularly the Croatian and Serbian, within the Austro-Hungarian Empire. To that end, Truhelka, in her novel *Naša djeca* [Our Children] (1896), shed light on the fate of girls in education, only to further develop that idea in the book *U carstvu duše: Listovi svojoj učenicima*, coming up with the concept of the modern woman – this ideal was created with emphasis on the “need for the mental education of women.”⁵⁸ Furthermore, Draga Gavrilović, through her heroine, the teacher Darinka, despite the social patriarchal and traditional streams of resistance to emancipation, presented education as “the possibility for young women to gain respect and improve their position and role in society.”⁵⁹ In the context of her work as an author, it is important to point out that Sarajlić based her short stories almost entirely on a brand-new outlook on the future, realizing that “only education and awareness of one's own identity could bring society out of its lethargy and passivity.”

In one of her first “evidently autobiographical”⁶⁰ stories, *Rastanak* [Parting] (1912), Sarajlić gave some insight into her own, intimate teaching experience “in one of the reformed *mekteps* of the country, and especially the reaction of local Muslim notables to her efforts to improve education for girls.”⁶¹ She self-reflectively narrates in first person. She, the teacher heroine, is giving extra lessons in ethics and reading with the aim of improving the knowledge of her advanced students (girls). In a time imbued with the concept of pan-Islamism, as pointed out by Ifeta Lihčić *et al.*, afterschool activities such as reading and ethics instruction not only violated certain basic tenets of school regulations and the curriculum and were subject of reprimand, but also a blow to the very foundations of Islam, opening the door to “new notions brought here by Austria-Hungary.” Through this subversive act, Sarajlić demonstrated her clear dedication to provide Muslim girls with an opportunity to learn more and expand their horizons. This understanding of the purpose of education in Sarajlić's prose is also evident in the work of Truhelka, who recognized philosophy as a life discipline and a general love for understanding, which had to be equally available to “men and women.” That was confirmed by Truhelka's resolve to oppose the “widespread misogyny”⁶² of

⁵⁸ IVON 2021: 199-218.

⁵⁹ TOMIĆ 2014: 146.

⁶⁰ HAWKESWORTH 2000: 255.

⁶¹ GIOMI 2015a: 1-18.

⁶² JAKOBOVIĆ FRIBEC 2007: 83-94.

her contemporaries who represented societal attitudes towards women. Just like Sarajlić, Gavrilović focused the efforts of her teacher heroine on the “development of a child’s mind and other virtues and faculties.”⁶³ Thus, the woman writer’s consciousness marked and shed light on the aspects of the teacher’s socially engaged work, as well as her professional efforts to teach children, despite difficult working conditions. Sarajlić raised this phenomenon to the more universal level to address the question of women’s status in the world. Based on the belief that “the current times demand a better understanding from women as well” (Sarajlić 1997: 326), that is, that the modernization of the Muslim woman became crucial, she unmasked traditional patriarchal mechanisms.

Making readers of the social deprivation of Muslim girl students, Sarajlić and her heroine shed light on the justifiable protest against the forceful passivization of girls. Similarly, this move was motivated by the need to expose the wrong-headed and restrictive educational practice of imposing limitations on the curriculum. When analyzed from the engaged perspective of the woman narrator, events gain their contours and there is a critique of the educational system within the framework of resistance against emancipatory efforts in the education of girls. Choosing to sacrifice herself, as the procedure will show, Sarajlić professed the considerable transformational potential of the enlightener who intended to improve society.⁶⁴ The entire collection of stories in *Teme* highlights the relationship to education, because there “she described the troubles connected with female schooling, Bo-

⁶³ GAVRILOVIĆ 2007: 219.

⁶⁴ Testimony to the aforementioned is also the obsessive thematizing of the problem of education in Bosnian society in the historic moment in which she was active. In her three additional short stories, Sarajlić emphasized the importance of education for girls. In “*Šumareva Zorka*” [Forester’s Zorka] she confronted two of these different worlds: one belongs to town life and is depicted through the character of the school boy Sadik, while in sheer contrast there are the girl Zorka and her brother who are in the countryside (the author calls it nature), thus highlighting the unjust imbalance in the world in order to deliver her key point in childlike fashion. The desire for knowledge remains unfulfilled. The short story “*Nova škola*” [New School], as the name implies, deals with a local community’s resistance to education, and furthermore shows that Islamic-Ottoman traditions remained strong in Bosnia. Bipolarization and a negative attitude towards Germans and Austro-Hungarian values to some extent appease and deconstruct the views of education and students (not only in the field of religion, but also in other disciplines such as writing, language, geography, art, and mathematics). The importance of education in this story is presented through the character of a learned man who tries to direct the population towards the benefits of knowledge and education, especially of poor children – who get the chance to both gain a good reputation in the community by contributing to its betterment and provide for their families, “thus feeding and protecting their people” (SARAJLIĆ 1997: 300). As a result, Sarajlić, in the manner of a skilled didactic teacher, pointed out that in this place there were three times more children enrolled in school than it was the case earlier. Additionally, in her short story “*Nekoliko stranica*” [Several pages], she underscored the dire condition of her people – as neglected and barren, stuck in the temptations of an obsolete and backward tradition and reluctant spirit – unfit to learn, change, provide mutual support, hard work and ultimately progress.

snian Muslim society's negative perception of female teachers and schoolgirls, and the diffidence of the ulema."⁶⁵ Likewise, the thesis about the author's capacity to bring about a revival and a degree of acceptance of Western values bolsters the argument about educating society through writing and/or narration. The rigid Bosnian educational system, leveraged by the inside control over knowledge and efforts to suppress the impact of emancipation on society, reprimands the teacher. Therefore, in the short story *Rastanak*, she wrote:

I've been punished. I've been punished because, of my own volition and outside of school time, I started to teach the cleverest of my schoolgirls ethics and reading. For this choice I have been scolded in front of the girls by the [communal] school commission, with the argument that I should not have done such a thing because these subjects are not necessary for girls. I saw how clever girls can be reduced to passivity, I saw how old the methodology we use with them is, I saw the loss of time – and all the rest; I was aware of how nowadays it is expected that women have more knowledge, and I felt I would have committed a mistake by not helping them. "Dear girls – I said when they gave me back their copies – they won't let us learn!" [*Ne daju nam učiti!*]. The schoolgirls kissed my hand and started to cry. Without knowing what I had to do, I also began to cry on their little heads (Sarajlić 1997: 325-326).

By reprimanding the teacher during final exams, the school board functions as a representative of the community and a body with the power to discipline a defiant teacher. Her reaction sends a ripple of relevant messages that need to be decoded through attentive reading. Primarily, it is not only an attempt to stay within the confines of their own communities for the reasons mentioned above and the pretention to preserve identity and discard Western ways; the reprimand also had multiple discouraging effects. A public check on the teacher's authority exercised by a symbolically higher and more powerful authority, in front of female students no less, was a pre-emptive act with the aim of both deterring and discouraging girls in their studies, and identifying work and knowledge as something negative. Moreover, the public would ensure that the case of the insubordinate teacher serves as an example to other teachers, that is, to hamper their subversive efforts, and, finally, to dissuade and confine the dissident teacher and to present her educational tools and methods as inefficient while simultaneously belittling her. Of course, it is noteworthy that this social repression is reminiscent of the method of patriarchal discouragement described by Draga Gavrilović. Her heroine Darinka, as a future teacher, is faced with judgement from teachers and the female students with whom she attended school. The defiance expressed in feminist and critical attitudes and the aspiration to create different norms was

⁶⁵ GIOMI 2015b: 274-292.

punished with an evaluation based firmly on a teacher's misogynous humiliation of intelligent pupils – which prevents them from getting jobs in their town and creating “better conditions for further professional advancement.”⁶⁶ Darinka identifies the barriers and finds ways to overcome them – which is only possible through the education of girls.

The experiences of Gavrilović's and Sarajlić's heroines, as well as their writing (public and professional), evoked the significant social anxiety of being a woman. It comes as no surprise that Nafija's heroine – the teacher/narrator – feels uneasy. The entire story is fraught with negative and dispiriting emotions and it both separates the teacher from her calling with stigma and disparagement from the dominant and powerful social circle and implies or illustrates the pain of her parting from her students. In the wake of reason and emotion, ideals and dark reality clashing inside her, the author reasons:

Still, if we are strong and want to serve our calling, we nevertheless must face the difficulties, with faith in success, no matter how strong and unyielding the resistance was!... And something unpleasant in me that was pulling me away from future teaching, was dying in me, thus relieving the pain of parting that I believed was one of the worst in my life (Sarajlić 1997: 327).

The author's story is charged with feeling of melancholy because of the choice she had to make and the fact that she might have to leave her students and her profession and withdraw to the privacy of her home. So, in spite of her strong awareness of the status of women in society as well as her aspiration to emancipation (accepting pro-Western views on the education of girls), the creation of innovative teaching methods and subversive practices and, in the domain of writing, her tendencies for enlightenment and revival and formation of a genre and writing style, the author as a teacher, which is made evident in her prose, evoked the impression of her teaching activity, stressing the paramount role of education in the development and progress of the/her people. She continued to resist the dominant, traditional system for many years to come (albeit indirectly), confirming her initial ideas of an enlightener and educator. Aside from the ordeal she suffered in her social circle, recounted in the intimate testimony of her story *Rastanak*, Nafija Sarajlić endured a personal ordeal as well.

Partial Erasure from the Public Sphere, Conceding to Her Author-Husband's Demands, and Finding a Mode of Survival for the Woman's Intellect

In view of that, her tragedy caused by collusion between institutions and the school system were reflected in her personal life when, at her husband's request,

⁶⁶ TOMIĆ 2014: 149.

she left her post and the teaching profession. Eventually, after only few years of working in the spirit of the Enlightenment, she “cut short her career at the behest of her husband, who maintained that her priority should be the proper upbringing of their children,” and, as her daughter Nerdetta Sarajlić said,⁶⁷ her mother complied with this demand without a second thought and for the sake of her family and children, she gave up her profession and public life. “As it was, when her eldest daughter died, she gave up writing altogether to devote herself to her family.”⁶⁸ So ended the three years of her career as a teacher and her six years as a writer.

Nafija Sarajlić “willingly erased herself from the public sphere” (according to Zlatan Delić, 2017), thus demonstrating her social accountability. By relegating the woman to her traditional role and having her conform to the model of mother and housewife (rooted in the binary matrix and undergirded by the common aspect pertaining to her reproductive capacity), marked more than a triumph for society in general. Namely, it is possible, through careful interpretation, to peel layer after layer of various dimensions and spheres, such as the religious perspective, but also the comprehensive domination of a patriarchal and traditional system over an intelligent and progressive woman. Educated Muslim women in the Austro-Hungarian period were compelled to confront a traditional and religious ideology. However, women from other religious groups in Austro-Hungary also faced restrictions and patriarchal discouragement of their professional work. This attitude was confirmed by the writer Draga Gavrilović’s withdrawal from public life. Gavrilović, having published under pseudonyms, abandoned her professional writing career in 1900. Even though it is often said that she stopped “writing due to an illness,”⁶⁹ the most recent research has shown that this process of self-deletion from the public sphere was caused by her critical attitude towards patriarchy, the reason why she “was insulted”⁷⁰ and which eventually resulted in her withdrawal and her focus on her teaching career.

The beginnings of Muslim women’s education are demonstrated through the example of Sarajlić, her personal and professional dilemma and concerns, and then innovative educational standards and finally through social reduction and the familial imperative to withdraw from her profession. All of this directly underscored that “the convergence between Muslim educated women and their male homologues can be considered to be a consequence of the asymmetrical power relationships between them – as journalists, men were the gatekeepers of Muslim literary journals; as husbands, they were the gatekeepers of private space.”⁷¹

⁶⁷ See: “Nafija Sarajlić, female author, intellectual and fighter for women’s rights.” See Bibliography for a more detailed account.

⁶⁸ HAWKESWORTH 2000: 255.

⁶⁹ KOH 2012: 57.

⁷⁰ PAVLOVIĆ 2021: 2.

Therefore the reaction of Šemsudin Sarajlić, the author's husband, who was also a Muslim revival writer and intellectual,⁷² was not surprising. His dual mission of preserving the public sphere on the one hand and suppressing the professional career of his own talented, avant-garde wife on the other – he ignored her needs and downplayed her knowledge and professional potential – would prove to be crucial in another dimension of Sarajlić's works, which will be showcased here. However, despite her withdrawal from the teaching profession, she never lost her values nor her life-long feminist awareness, nor her need to proceed in an Enlightenment tone with regard to the people from her immediate social circle. She used the privacy of her home “to give literacy courses in her garden” to illiterate women from her neighbourhood and tutor children as well. In this way, Sarajlić echoed the humanity and engagement also displayed by Gavrilović, who “not only taught children, but also older women who had not had the opportunity to be educated.”⁷³ The commitment of both women, as teachers and writers, to instruct illiterate women, testifies to their awareness of the importance of women's general literacy. Thus, Sarajlić found her own way and means to be professionally active as a teacher in the anonymity of her private sphere. Besides fulfilling her duty, explained in a remark in her work *Nekoliko stranica* [Several pages]: “that those who have more knowledge in reading and language teach those who have less knowledge,”⁷⁴ she lived her principles until the very end.

Conclusion: A Rebuke to the Traditionalism of the Community that Silenced Women's Voices and Retrieving a Female Writer from Obscurity

One of the key objectives of this paper is to put Nafija Sarajlić's biography and the literary career into proper perspective in light of the question of Muslim women's emancipation, i.e., the Muslim women's question. The second innovative dimension of this paper can be seen through its representation of the educational emancipation of Muslim women, described in Sarajlić's work. The process is essentially European, but also a part of a broader South Slavic (Serbian and Croatian – Austro-Hungarian at the time) emancipatory upswing in the struggle for women's rights. Therefore, along with its concern with the Muslim women's question and

⁷¹ GIOMI 2015a: 1-18.

⁷² It is very important to mention that this author's biography indicates that he graduated from madrasa of Gazi Husrev-bey in Sarajevo, which means that he was deeply defined by religious discourse and dogma, as well the stances of that era's Islamic Community and society, on the issue of women's education and the unavoidable challenges in the process of its modernization within society and the system in which they lived – especially with regard to the issue of Muslim women.

⁷³ PAVLOVIĆ 2021: 2.

⁷⁴ SARAJLIĆ 1997: 323.

Sarajlić's prose, it also features a paradigm of the educational, literary and feminist engagement of three female writers, Draga Gavrilović, Jagoda Truhelka and Nafija Sarajlić. Regarding the historic fact that Sarajlić was the first female writer concerned with these issues, this research has greatly contributed to the study of the significant aspects of her proto-feminist work, as well as the significance of her professional career and writing in the context of the challenging problem of making Muslim women more European. The focus of official Austro-Hungarian policy to create a model for a modern European Muslim woman was the issue of women's education. Therefore, the focus of this research is Nafija Sarajlić, the elements of her biography (the intimate experience of education, her relationship with her father, her career as a teacher – one of the first Muslim female teacher, with a different set of practices – her additional work with female students, her emancipated viewpoint, her ultimate abandonment of both professions, i.e., teacher and writer) and her progressive prose as these various concepts intermingled.

Her stories showcase, identify and interpret motifs, models and patterns of transcendence of social constraints, the importance of education and the rebellion against prevailing values and suppression, as well as the compulsion to keep women under control. The abandonment of her teaching and writing careers came about because of intense private and public pressure, which made her concede to the retrograde practice whereby women did not live up to their full potential and earn their independence. Similarly, her viewpoint and attitudes regarding the different social milieus in which she lived were responsible for her fall from favour with her community, and consequently, the culture and literary circles to which she belonged.

In the current situation, researching Sarajlić's work translates into national practices and principles, wherein the Bosnian literary canon insists on the splendour of her sacrifice and even her emulation of the role of submissive Muslim woman. For the reasons stated above, interpretations of her collection of short stories *Teme* remained at that level, without contextual understanding, in-depth reading and a search for codes and meanings. In spite of traditionalisation and patriarchal and clerical processes, which to a greater or lesser degree accompanied the Bosnian and Herzegovinian (Muslim) community throughout the history, but also the other communities belonging to the Austro-Hungarian monarchy, the importance of a new consideration of Sarajlić's character and work is reflected in the discovery of her significance to Muslim women's emancipation and activism. At the same time, extricating her from oblivion and superficial analyses, as well as nationalist and pretentious claims to parts of her biography, relativisation and manipulation, reflects the grave need for a new reading which should develop in three directions. The framework or context shows that Sarajlić, both as a writer and teacher, as shown by her heroine, had experienced social negation, stigmatism and censure, which she had in common with writers from different confessional groups such as Draga

Gavrilović or Jagoda Truhelka. In that manner, the particular story of emancipation of a Muslim woman and her modernization, when put into a broader context, shows that Nafija Sarajlić is a significant link for the reconstruction of the (Muslim) female literary and cultural tradition. She was an active participant on the public stage and an advocate for women's emancipation and lastly, her work represents a starting point for the discourse on the modernization of South Slav and European Muslim women.

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Muslimansko žensko pitanje i emancipacijski potencijal književnog rada Nafije Sarajlić u južnoslavenskom i evropskom kontekstu

Stvaranje modernog identiteta muslimanke žene moguće je pratiti u polju književnosti, na primjeru tema prve muslimanske (Bošnjačke) spisateljice Nafije Sarajlić (1893-1970). Njezin književni i aktivistički rad, te rad u profesiji, s obzirom na to da je bila i prva školovana učiteljica, determiniran je društvenim okolnostima smjene dva državna i vrijednosna, opozitna sistema: otomanskog i austrougarskog. U kulturalnom okruženju sukoba istoka i zapada, u Bosni i Hercegovini tijekom drugog desetljeća 20. stoljeća, nastala je kratka zbirka proze *Teme*, koja predstavlja rast i povijesno funkcioniranje ženske figure. Emancipacijski diskurs, koji prati biografiju i književnost Nafije Sarajlić, prožet je sviješću i utjecajem procesa europeizacije, koji su se reflektirali kroz dvojnost odabira: tradiciju i samoočuvanje te odbacivanje tradicionalnog okruženja. Pod utjecajima službenih državnih politika, posebno u polju obrazovanja, i sukoba unutar muslimanske zajednice, pokrenuto je muslimansko žensko pitanje. Nafija Sarajlić kao profeminiistička spisateljica u kontekstu tih promjena profesionalnim radom (učiteljica i spisateljica) zauzima važno mjesto u tim procesima, te je u smjeru znanstvenih istraživanja bilo nužno demistificirati njezinu ulogu i sagledati njezin rad iz drukčije, kontekstualizirane perspektive. Ukratko, spisateljica je ostavila veliki emancipacijski zalog od neosporne važnosti za procese muslimanskog ženskog pitanja. Fokus znanstvenih istraživanja je na jednom od najznačajnijih emancipacijskih pitanja, onom o obrazovanju muslimanske žene tog perioda. Stoga hipoteze uključuju detaljno razmatranje povijesnog okvira, biografskih podataka vezanih za Nafiju Sarajlić (intimno iskustvo obrazovanja, odnos s ocem, profesionalni poziv učiteljice – prva učiteljica muslimanka, drugačija pedagoška praksa – dodatni rad s učenicama, emancipacijski stavovi, napuštanje obje profesije – učiteljske i spisateljske), kao i niz intimnih iskustava (djelomično zabilježenih u fragmentima autobiografskog tipa). Preko analize specifičnih motiva, ne samo da se rekonstruira navedenji povijesni period, nego se i osvjetljavaju značajni aspekti tijekom emancipacije muslimanske žene prožete težnjom, ali i vlastitim utjecajem na formiranje modela moderne evropske muslimanke. Zahvaljujući inoviranom čitanju kratkoga proznog djela *Teme* Nafije Sarajlić postignut je cilj identificiranja njezine uloge u tom vremenu. Nafija Sarajlić, kako je to argumentirano ovim radom, značajna je spona za rekonstrukciju (muslimanske) ženske književne i kulturne tradicije, aktivna učesnica na javnoj sceni i zagovaračica ženske emancipacije žene. Na koncu njezin rad predstavlja početnu točku k razmatranju problema modernizacije evropske muslimanke. Unatoč stalno djelujućim procesima tradicionalizacije, patrijarhalizacije i klerikalizacije unutar muslimanske zajednice (s jedne strane “brisanje” spisateljice, s druge manipulacija njezinim nacionalnim identitetom

te sužavanje na kanonske potrebe), značenje djela Nafije Sarajlić nije sporno. Izvlačenje iz anonimnosti i pogrešnih interpretacija odvija se zahvaljujući novim čitanjima – značajnim za rekonstrukciju (muslimanske) ženske književne i kulturne tradicije, kao i za identificiranje spisateljčinog emancipatorskog angažmana. Također, korak naprijed u istaživačkom smislu predstavlja komparativni pristup pri čemu se rad Nafije Sarajlić stavlja u uže kontekste sa djelom Draginje Drage Gavrilović i Jagode Truhelka. Na taj način se predupređuje egzotizacija i izolirano izučavanje muslimanskog ženskog kulturnog i književnog naslijeđa. Riječ je o transnacionalnom pristupu koji omogućava nova čitanja i smještanja i ovog fenomena u šire južnoslavenske, evropske i globalne pokrete za emancipaciju žena. Konkretno, lik i prozno djelo spisateljice Nafije Sarajlić predstavljaju početnu točku u stvarnom putu emancipacije muslimanske žene.

Ključne riječi: Nafija Sarajlić, protofemizam, emancipacija muslimanke, model moderne europske muslimanke, južnoslavenski kontekst, Draginja Draga Gavrilović, Jagoda Truhelka, obrazovanje, književnost

Key words: Nafija Sarajlić, proto-feminism, emancipation of Muslim women, model of modern European Muslim women, South-Slavic context, Draginja Draga Gavrilović, Jagoda Truhelka, education, literature

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